

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 1, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

In light of continuing instability in the Middle East and in North Africa, we write today to urge your Administration's immediate action to ensure America's energy security by expediting the permitting process for safe offshore energy exploration and development without further delay.

The ongoing unrest and rising volatility throughout the Middle East underscores the urgency to put our country on a path toward energy independence. U.S. oil prices recently jumped above the \$100 per barrel mark for the first time since 2008, and as prices continue to rise, American families and businesses are already feeling the impact in their pocketbooks and at the pump. Our country is home to vast energy resources, and your Administration has forced American exploration and drilling to a halt in the most critical region of the U.S. that provides our domestic energy supplies.

The Gulf of Mexico produces nearly one-third of our domestically produced oil, and offshore natural gas production in the Gulf accounts for 13 percent of total U.S. production. While your Administration's official moratoria on drilling permits were lifted on May 28, 2010 and October 12, 2010 for shallow and deepwater drilling permits respectively, a de facto moratorium ("permitorium") still exists and must be lifted without delay. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has issued only one deepwater drilling permit and only 32 permits for new shallow water wells since the official moratoria were lifted, which is far below the 10 permits per week that were averaged before the Macondo well spill.

Not only is American energy security at risk, so too are thousands of American jobs. In addition, these policies by your Administration are a contributing factor to the increase we're seeing in gasoline prices at the pump. As a result of the uncertainty by the federal government, seven floating rigs and five jackup rigs have departed the Gulf of Mexico since the Macondo spill. There are currently an additional four rigs that are considering leaving the Gulf of Mexico. With one rig equaling 500 jobs (100 workers on the rig, plus 400 workers supporting drilling operations onshore), thousands of jobs across the Gulf Coast both upstream and downstream remain at risk. This industry in the Gulf of Mexico comprises not only oil and gas companies, but also a network of suppliers and contractors that purchase goods as diverse as forgings, valves, computers, chemicals and helicopters from suppliers in all 50 states.

As the executive in chief, you have the ability, and more importantly the duty, to direct your Administration to act in a manner that protects our national energy security and American jobs and ensures that we do not remain hostage to the political tensions of Middle Eastern nations. We respectfully ask that you direct DOI and BOEM to remove the barriers to the safe exploration and production of our domestic energy resources that are vital to all Americans and to our energy security by bringing immediate and very concrete clarity for offshore permitting and require DOI and BOEM to immediately hasten the approval of permits for safe offshore drilling.

There is no time more urgent than now to require this action. We need to safely and responsibly produce our domestic resources offshore in order to reduce this reliance on Middle Eastern imports and in turn, increase our economic growth. The Gulf of Mexico holds the largest and most productive oil resources in the United States, and further delays to safely producing these domestic resources will severely jeopardize our energy security and leave us more dependent on the volatile Middle East for our energy supplies.

Sincerely,

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